

Swim Meets 101

A Guide to Swim Meet Survival

Everyone is nervous about their first meet. Use this guide to give you a general idea of what to expect. Once you get through your first meet, everything will make so much more sense! No two meets are the same. The most important thing to remember is to be flexible. Swim meets are large undertakings and are run by humans who are fallible. It's ok to be a little confused at first. Don't be afraid to ask a question, any of our coaches or our Team mom/dad, can answer any questions you have.

The Night Before - pack the bags

The Swim Bag

You will need several items at the meet. In addition to the normal practice items (swimsuit, towel, goggles - 2 pairs and cap - with a spare), you will want or need a few more things for a swim meet. Here's a basic checklist:

- Parka, Warm-ups or a Hoodie - keep warm between races or sit on if necessary
- Towels...two are better than one
- Loose fitting, comfortable clothing to wear in between races
- Chairs and/or a tent (commonly called an easy up) - most meets don't allow stand set-up, which means you will be outside and come and go seating will be available during your swimmers' race.

The "Other" Bag Do NOT underestimate the importance of "The Other Bag"

This is the activity bag to keep your children happy and busy while they wait for their events to be called. Remember to label all your items and keep an eye on your things! You are out in public and at a large event where there are many people who are not always playing close attention. Theft can happen anywhere. Here are some suggestions for quiet, yet fun activities:

- Cards,
- Travel Games
- Books
- iPod,

What Parents Need

You may want to consider bringing some of the following:

- A comfortable folding chair
- Ball-point pen, magic marker, highlighter
- Book, paper, magazine
- Meet Mobile App
- Sports You App

If we are assigned a lane to time, we will need volunteers to time the meet. If you are at an indoor meet and dressed for cold weather, it gets VERY warm in the indoor pool area. Be sure to dress in layers or bring some lightweight clothing to change into.

The Cooler

You will want to pack food/drinks, here are some good and bad swim meet food choices:

Good - Think of natural energy. Easily digestible, portable foods are your best choices:

- Water, juice, sports drink (fluids are VERY important) NO SODA
- Bagels (hold the cream cheese)
- Carrot and celery sticks
- Fruit – grapes, bananas & apples (oranges can be messy)
- Granola bars
- Plain or artificially sweetened yogurt
- Cheese
- Beef Jerky

Bad:

- Candy & sweets (anything with heavy sugar content)
- Fatty foods (takes too long to digest)
- Greasy, heavy foods (no nutritional value)

FLUIDS ARE VERY IMPORTANT! Even slight dehydration can cause cramping and fatigue and a bad swim meet experience. Encourage your swimmer to hydrate all day long. Moderate your child's food intake and remember less is better. Some kids think they're hungry when really they're bored and looking for something to do (visit "The Other Bag"). Swimmers need a good night's sleep. Make sure you know the warm-up times and pool location, plan to arrive at least 15 minutes prior.

The Arrival What do I do FIRST?

When you first arrive, have your children go to the designated team area. They should take their cap, goggles and towel and immediately report to their coach in the pool area. Locate the Team "camping" spot. If outdoors, set up your tent and chairs. If in a gym, set up your chairs and put out your blanket so your swimmer has a place to hang out while waiting for their next race.

Heat Sheet, most pools are using the meet mobile app for heat sheets. Occasionally you will go and purchase your heat sheet. While your swimmer is warming up, this is the time to write down your swimmer's events, so you can mark their arm. Draw a table similar to tic tac toe. Here is an example: The first number represents the event number, the second the heat number and the third the lane number and finally the distance and stroke abbreviation. 10/3/5 – 25 fr = Event 10, Heat 3, Lane 5 in the 25 free event 16/2/4 – 50 bk = Event 16, Heat 2, Lane 4 in the 50 back

Event	Heat	Lane	Stroke
3	2	8	25Fr
7	6	3	25 Bk

Once your swimmer returns, make sure they drink something and put on their warm ups to stay warm. They should just hang out and rest for their first race! It is also a good time to make sure they know their events. Please make sure your swimmer comes and sees the coach 2 events prior to their swim so they can warm up. They will not wait on a swimmer who is not on the block when it is their time.

The Meet

Make sure that your swimmer stays warm and hydrated. The body uses energy to warm itself and energy is something to conserve before events. Make sure that they keep up with their cap and goggles – there's nothing more nerve wracking than searching for caps and goggles seconds before its time to report. If they keep their caps on and goggles pulled down like a necklace or tuck the cap and goggles into the strap or waistband of their swimsuit, they're less likely to lose them. Your main job at this point is to make sure your child stays nearby between events as opposed to wandering the facility. Most meets have a ready bench for the 25s, please make sure you are listening to the announcements. The ready bench is on the pool deck, it could be in a set of bleachers, a row of chairs, or just cones with numbers on them. Parents or coaches are calling out swimmer names and lane assignments over and over again, please make sure to have your swimmer to them when they call for them. When your child hears the FIRST CALL for ready bench...they should check their arm to see if they are swimming in this event. This is a skill they should be taught early in their swimming career. If your child is not paying attention to the calls, they could miss an event and will be extremely disappointed. When your child's event is called, they should head to the ready bench and listen for their name. They will be shown to a seat that marks their order. Once a child is seated in, they should remain there until they are escorted into the pool area. After the race, your swimmer will go talk to the coach, warm down, then will head back to your spot where you can meet them and give them their much-deserved kudos! Remember that as a parent you are not allowed on the pool deck, to discuss time with the timers, or approach the stroke and turn judges. If there is a question or problem, you should ask your coach who will then handle it for you.

Note: It is very important that your child speaks to their coach both before and after their race. This is a great way to get immediate feedback during a race setting.

Swimmer Disqualifications - It takes time and lots of practice to master the technical aspects of competitive swimming. Throughout your child's swimming career, they will increase their knowledge and improve their starts, strokes, turns and finishes. During a sanctioned meet,

officials and judges monitor the competition to ensure that starts, strokes, turns and finishes are done in accordance with rule requirement. ALL kids will at some time in their career, experience the disappointment of being disqualified (DQ'd) in an event. Remember that this is a learning opportunity and the DQ is an excellent tool to help your child. Though it may be disappointing, you can help your child by offering support and encouraging them to always do their best.

Race Results - Head back to your spot and get ready for your next event. After a couple of events, you can go looking for where they are posting the results. The results usually run a few events behind due to processing time. This is where you will find out what your swimmer's time was and how they fared among all the swimmers in their age group. The results are listed by event and show the swimmers in order of finish. You can use the meet mobile app but those are unofficial times and may not be correct.

Ribbons and trophies - Ribbons are usually given for 1st through 8th place finishes in each event. Trophies are usually awarded for High point winners. High point winners are the swimmers who scored the most points in their age group during the meet. Ribbons and Trophies for High Point and Runner Up are awarded after the meet. If you leave before awards, the hosting team will either mail them to us or give them to us at the next meet. This takes a while so we recommend waiting to pick them up.